

Apples on Fire

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Category: My Little Pony

Genre: Drama, Romance

Language: English

Characters: Applejack

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2016-04-12 21:27:03

Updated: 2016-04-12 21:27:03

Packaged: 2016-04-27 19:07:35

Rating: T

Chapters: 1

Words: 4,660

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: (AU) An untimely incident forces Applejack and her siblings to move to Manehattan to live with their relatives. Soon she is enrolled to a school where she's sure she would never fit in. That's until she meets Ryder Blaise, a young man who thinks people expect too much from him. [DRAMA/SLICE-OF-LIFE/ROMANCE/CROSSOVER] (this story is also available on)

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Chapter 1

Infinite Preparatory Academy; where diversity is infinite.

Applejack reread the brochure for the billionth time. It was finally happening. Today was her first day at her new school. She sighed. For two weeks, she's been dreading this day. She never thought she ever go to school again.

After her parents died, she and Big Mac had to quit school to help Granny Smith with the farm and look after Applebloom. She didn't really mind not going to school. In fact, she enjoyed working on the farm. It was the biggest highlight of her life. Those times seemed so far away now.

"Applejack!" she turned toward the sound of her aunt's voice. "Come down, you're going to be late!"

"Comin'!" she looked herself in her full-length mirror for the last time. Everything seemed to be in order. Her white uniform shirt was clean and wrinkle-free. Her black skirt came down to her knees and was also nice and clean. She wore black hoof-socks that came up to her knees as well. Finally, as usual, her long blonde mane was down and hung past her shoulders. Her aunt never liked Applejack wearing her mane up in her usual bun or ponytail. She always thought she looked better with her mane down.

Yep, everything looked in order. She turned, grabbed her tan schoolbag, and walked out her bedroom door. By the time she made it to the kitchen, her aunt and little sister was already there; eating breakfast. Big Mac and Uncle Fuji were already at work. Winona was busy eating out of her dog dish.

"You're gonna have to take a bag," her aunt, Gala Apple, said, holding a paper bag out to her. "You're already late."

Applejack took the bag from her. "Thanks, auntie."

"Now ya sure ya don't want me to drive ya? Manehattan ain't like Ponyville, ya know. A bunch of crazies roam the streets."

"Naw, Ah can take care of myself," Applejack kissed Applebloom's forehead and patted Winona. "See ya'll later!"

"Bye, big sis!"

"See ya, sweetie pie!"

Winona barked happily.

Applejack waved good-bye one last time before finally walking out of their small apartment. She walked down five flights of stairs and was immediately greeted by the cool late-autumn air as she walked out of the building. Confident that her aunt wasn't watching her from the window, she took a red hairband from her bag and pulled her mane into a loose bun.

The school was only three blocks so she'll get there in no time. She passed by a lot of people as she walked; a bunch of them stallions. A few of them whistled at her but she silently ignored them. She was used to it.

She came to a corner and waited to cross. The "WALK" sign came on and she crossed the street. As she got closer and closer to the school, she began to get a twisting feeling in her stomach.

Infinite Preparatory Academy isn't going to be like the other schools she attended in the past. The brochure said that it was one of the best schools in Manehattan. It was also one of a few schools that encouraged diversity. A bunch of different ponies and creatures go there, and so do a few humans as well. Deep down, she hoped that she would be able to fit in and make new friends without any problems.

Besides, it wasn't a good idea to start a new school and not make friends, right?

The school came into view as she came to the last corner. She gaped in astonishment. The school campus was ginormous! Three massive buildings sat in a semi-circle; she could see a couple more behind them. Students were walking about; some in groups while others walked in pairs. Standing tall right in the middle of the campus was a statue of a male alicorn. He was sitting down with his head turned downward; a peaceful expression on his face and his wings spread open.

Applejack gulped. Fitting it right away and making friends didn't seem like immediate possibility. The "WALK" sign came on. She took in deep breath before walking across the street. She was then walking across the school parking lot when a loud whistle got her attention.

"Watch out!"

Jumping out of the way, Applejack avoided getting run down by a guy on a motorcycle. Her heart pounding hard inside her chest, she watched as the motorcycle came to a screeching stop and the rider hopped off. He took off his helmet and Applejack was shocked to see his face was a skull covered in flames. He turned and a smirk crossed his face as he tossed a salute her way.

Applejack clenched her fists and scowled. Before she could do anything like chew him out for almost running her over, he walked away from the parking lot and disappeared into the crowd of students.

Applejack shook off her anger. Come on now, girl, she thought to herself. Ya come across similar assholes before, it ain't anythin' new. She quickly got her composure and walked toward the front entrance.

When she made it to the door, she could feel everyone's eyes on her. There's nothin' to see here folks. Ah'm just a lone country mare goin' to a fancy school in the big city. She pushed open the double doors and strode into the building. She stopped dead in her tracks as she took it all in. The school sure looked bigger on the inside than the outside.

"Hello, you must be the new student," a voice said from behind. Applejack turned. A unicorn mare stood there; coat, mane, and tail purple and glasses perched on her nose. Her mane was tied into a tight bun.

"Yeah, Ah am," Applejack gave the mare a small smile. "An' you are?"

"I'm Twilight Sparkle. You're Applejack Apple, correct?" when Applejack nodded, she gave her a big smile. "Well, then, welcome to Infinite Preparatory Academy; where diversity is infinite."

Applejack arched an eyebrow. "Do they really make ya'll say that every time somepony new comes along?"

Twilight shrugged. "Yep, pretty much. Anyways, I have volunteered to be your guide for the next few days. That way you won't have trouble finding your way around school."

"Well, thank ya kindly but should Ah be gettin' to the main office to get my schedule and all that?"

"No problem, I already have it right here," Twilight took out a piece of paper from her jacket pocket and then gestured for Applejack to follow her. "Come on, I'll show you where your locker is first."

The two mares began to walk down the hall. They passed by dozens of

students along the way; each one of them different from the other. Applejack stared. She had never seen so many different kinds of creatures. She passed by different species of ponies, wolves, gryphons, bat-ponies, a few humans, and creatures she couldn't identify. It felt sort of strange they all went to the same school but given time, she knew she'll get used to it.

Applejack suddenly realized that none of the other students were in uniform. They all wore regular clothes.

She turned toward Twilight who wore a pink tee, blue jeans, and a zipped-open hoodie jacket. "Hey, how come nopony is wearin' their uniforms?"

Twilight looked at her, almost sheepishly. "Today is non-uniform day."

Applejack suddenly blushed in embarrassment as she cried, "Non-uniform day?! The brochure didn't say anything about that."

Twilight shrugged. "We just started doing it recently. The principal wanted to see how good we are with a dress-code so she issued non-uniform day every other week." She patted Applejack on the shoulder. "Don't be embarrassed, though. A lot of people made the same mistake a bunch of times. And you didn't know until now."

Applejack nodded as she silently cursed herself. So that's why people were staring at her. She thought it was just because she was new. She sighed. Oh, well, she couldn't do anything about it now.

"Well, here we are!" Twilight stopped in front of a wall of lockers. "Here's your locker, #156. I'll get you a lock for it later on."

"Okay, thanks," Applejack opened her locker door and peered inside. Suddenly, colorful confetti blasted in her face and a blur of pink rushed up to her.

"HELLO, NEW GIRL~!" a bubbly pink earth pony mare took Applejack's hand and started shaking it furiously. "WHAT'S YOUR NAME? MY NAME'S PINKIE PIE! DO YOU LIKE PARTIES? I LOVE PARTIES! WHERE ARE YOU FROM AND DO WANT TO BE MY FRIEND?!"

Applejack was too speechless to speak. She never met someone who came on so strong or talked so fast. And boy, the mare sure did have a firm grip!

"Pinkie Pie!" Twilight scolded. "What did I tell you about putting confetti cannons in other people's lockers?"

Pinkie turned to her. "I know, I know but I really wanted to start the new girl's day off with a bang so I put the cannon in her locker to do just that!" She turned back to Applejack. "So, what is your name, pony-who-I-never-seen-before?"

"Uh, Applejack," Applejack swallowed nervously. "It's mighty nice to meet ya."

"Oooh, I really like your accent," Pinkie skipped closer to her. "So where are you from? Oh, don't tell me. Is it Trottingham? Hoofington? Appleloosa?"

Applejack stared at her, still a little caught off guard. "Uh, well, Ah-."

Pinkie suddenly gasped. "Oh, there's Wally, bye!"

She ran off in blur, leaving Applejack and Twilight staring after her.

"Well, that was Pinkie Pie, party and surprise extraordinaire," she smiled wearily. "Don't worry; everyone isn't as straightforward as she is."

Applejack sighed in relief. She was pretty sure she couldn't handle another greeting like that. The bell rang overhead. Students began to fill the halls; quickly hurrying to their first class of the day.

"We better get going," Twilight replied over the noise of the other students. "Luckily, we have the same first period."

As she followed Twilight up the stairs to their next location, Applejack felt like the twisting in her stomach start to tighten a little bit more. The idea of fitting in this massive preparatory school with all these different people and non-uniform days really didn't seem like an immediate possibility at all. Well, at least she made a couple of friends though.

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Ryder wasn't really planning on going to the principal's office at any time today but here he was. He was called in the middle of fourth period. He couldn't imagine what the principal wanted with him this time. He wasn't in any fights and he made sure to smoke a cigarette behind Rain Forest Hall where no one was looking. So whatever it is she wants it could be anything.

He was seated in her office for ten minutes before she walked in. She was a middle-aged earth pony mare with a deep plum coat, a black mane and tail, and sea-foam green eyes. She wore a pin-striped suit and glasses and her mane was in a bun. She had a stern look on her face as usual.

"Mr. Blaise," she said as she took her place behind her mahogany desk. She had a Canterloian accent. "Sorry to keep you waiting."

"Not a problem," he responded; sounding bored. "So, Miss Blackbird, what did I do this time?"

She looked at him for a moment. "Nothing that I know of . . . unless you did something I should know about?" He shrugged nonchalantly and she sighed. "Well, Mr. Blaise, I wanted to talk to you about your grades."

"What about them? I have a C-point average. That's good, isn't it?"

"Yes, but I looked at your state test scores. And let me say, I was really surprised at what I found."

Ryder stared at her for a moment.

She took a folder from a drawer and opened it. "It seems that you've scored higher than any student at this school; including Skulduggery and Twilight. But your school work in class says otherwise. Do you care to explain?"

He shrugged again. "So I don't try as hard as I do on tests. What's the problem?"

"The problem, Mr. Blaise, is that you should put as much effort in your school work as you do on your tests. A C-point average might be okay for some people but your aunt and I believe you can do better."

Ryder sighed. So his aunt put her up to this. She always telling him to try hard and do his best and all that crap. He heard the same old speech too many times. It's time to sing a different tune.

"So what is it, Mr. Blaise," she asked as she took off her glasses. "Are your current classes not challenging enough or . . .?"

No, I just don't want to stand out any more than I already do. "No, I'll try harder, okay? Can I go now?"

She looked as if she wanted to say more but decided against it. "Very well, you can go but I want to continue this later on."

"Yes, ma'am," he got up and made for the door.

"Oh, and Ryder?" he turned to her. "I would prefer you smoke outside of school grounds from now on. Second-hand smoke kills too, you know."

He chuckled. This woman has eyes in the back of her head for sure. "Yes, ma'am, I'll remember that."

As he walked out of the office, the bell rang and students started filling the halls. Lunch time. He walked down the hall with everyone else, looking inconspicuous. Well, if you call a tall teenaged-skeleton-on-fire inconspicuous.

He entered the massive lunchroom and was immediately greeted with the loud chit-chat of the other students. He got in line, selected a sandwich and an apple, paid, and went outside to eat. Students usually loved eating outside when the weather was nice and warm. But as the pegasi made the air grow cooler, students preferred to stay inside and eat. Since Ryder was on fire, though, the cold didn't really bother him.

He made it to the back of the auditorium building where his friend was already sitting. Walter Kovacs was a young sixteen-year-old human boy with red hair and dark eyes. He wore his uniform even though it was non-uniform day; a white shirt, black tie and pants. It wasn't because he forgot, it because he didn't have anything else to wear.

As he sat down beside him, Ryder noticed that Walter was eating cold beans out of a Tupperware bowl. "You want me to heat those up for you, Rorschach?" he asked as he unwrapped his sandwich. Rorschach was Walter's nickname.

Rorschach shook his head. "Find like this. Finished anyway." His voice was raspy. He ate the last spoonful of beans, put the top back on the bowl, and tossed the bowl into his backpack. They sat there in silence for a while; the only sounds are Ryder's chewing jaw.

Ryder swallowed before saying, "Hey, where's Skul?"

"In the library, had to finish extra credit work."

Ryder snickered. "That egghead lives off school work." He finished his sandwich and began to pull out a pack of cigarettes from his jacket pocket.

"Thought you weren't allowed to smoke on school grounds," Rorschach responded.

"Dude, you've known me for years. I don't really give a damn about school rules." He snapped his fingers and his thumb immediately went aflame. He lit his cigarette, shook his thumb out, and inhaled. He crossed his legs, leaned back against the brick wall, and relaxed.

"Hey, did you talk to Pinkie again today?" he asked around his cigarette.

"Yes."

"Is she still calling you 'Wally'?"

"Yes."

There was awkward silence for a moment. ". . . are you . . . gonna bang her yet?"

". . . No."

They sat there; quietly enjoying the silence. Normally, Ryder would love to talk but whenever he was with Rorschach or Skulduggery, he loved to just sit, relax, and smoke. Besides, Rorschach really wasn't a guy of many words.

The comfortable silence was interrupted by the bell; signaling the end of lunch and beginning of fifth period. Ryder stood up, and put out his cigarette with the toe of his boot. "You coming in or what?"

Rorschach shook his head. "No, staying here for a little longer."

Ryder shrugged and walked away from the auditorium building. Hundreds of students were already hustling about when he walked into the main building; getting to their next classes. As he walked down the hall, a large wolf bumped into him. The wolf snarled.

"Watch it, flame-head!" The wolf walked away but Ryder anticipated stopping and punching him in the face. He didn't really want to start a fight. Not now, anyway. He continued on his way to his next class, Equestrian History. By the time he got to the room, the late bell had already rung. The door was closed and when he tried to open it, it wouldn't budge. It was locked, actually.

"From now on, when the late bell rings, the door will be closed and locked. Perhaps then you will start coming to class on time."

Ryder groaned. He'd forgotten about the warning. Oh, well. There's nothing he could do about it now. He started to roam around the halls for a bit. When class was in session, the halls were completely empty. So it was perfect for anyone who wanted to skip class and hide out.

He walked up the stairs; planning on hanging out on the roof. He stopped suddenly when he noticed someone standing in front of the fourth floor window. An earth pony mare stood there; coat orange, mane and tail blonde, and eyes green. She wore the school's uniform and freckles adorned her face. Her mane was in a loose bun. Ryder couldn't help but think he knew her from somewhere.

She was looking out the window so she didn't notice him walking up to her. "You do know that it's non-uniform day, right?"

She jumped as she turned to face him. Her face soured. "So Ah'm told." She had a strong yet soft country accent. She then turned to leave.

"Hey, don't leave," Ryder called out. "I'm just trying to make conversation." He leaned against the wall near the window.

She feigned a smile. "Now why would Ah wanna have a conversation with a guy who almost ran me over this mornin'?" She then dropped the smile.

"Oh," Ryder paused. "So that was you?"

"Eeyep."

Ryder cursed. So that was where he knew her.

"So?"

He looked at her. "So . . . what?"

"Aren't ya gonna apologize for what happened?"

And she was still pissed about it. "Should I apologize?" he asked.

She narrowed her eyes at him. "Um, yes?"

"Well, then, I won't." He went to continue up the stairs.

"Are ya'll always such an asshole?" she questioned.

"Are you always this annoying?"

"Screw you."

"Time and place, babe." She scowled and started to leave.

"Okay, wait," he caught up with her and grabbed her arm. "I'm kidding. I'm fucking with you."

Her face soured again as she snatched her arm away. "Ya have a funny way of jokin' around."

"Hey, everyone's different," he looked at her. "So you're the new student."

"That's right," she stared at him as if contemplating his next response.

"Are you going to tell me your name or what?"

"Now why would Ah do that?"

"I don't know; it's polite?"

She rolled her eyes. "You're the one to talk."

"Hey, I'm trying here." They stood in awkward silence for a moment. "Okay, since you won't tell me your name, I'll tell you mine. I'm Ryder Blaise."

She stood there before saying, ". . . Applejack."

"Applejack, huh?" He chuckled.

"Somethin' funny about my name?"

"No, no, nothing's funny," he shrugged. "I like it."

The mare's eyebrows shot up. "Oh."

Suddenly, the sixth period bell rang and the halls were immediately filled with students. She looked at him.

"Ah should probably go . . ."

"Yeah, so should I," Ryder winked at her. "See you around then."

He walked off; disappearing into the crowd.

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Applejack stood there for a moment; looking at where the flaming fellow had gone. That was the weirdest encounter she ever had in her life. It was even weirder than the encounter with Pinkie Pie.

He liked her name? That didn't seem right. She shook her head. He's just a guy who was tryin' to flirt with ya, sugarcube. Let's of guys flirt; it's nothin' new. Forget about it.

"Applejack, Applejack, hey!"

Applejack turned to see Twilight Sparkle running up to her. "Hey, Twilight."

"Hey, where were you? You left class to go to the bathroom and never came back."

"Oh," Applejack blushed. "Ah just wanted to get some air." She looked around the hall and crossed her arms. "Ah don't really get this place."

"You will eventually," Twilight assured her. "It's always hard coming to a new school but sooner or later, you'll get into the routine of things."

Applejack smiled. "Yeah, maybe you're right." Another bell suddenly rang. "We ain't late, are we?"

"Oh, no, our next period is study hall," Twilight gestured to her. "Come on, I'll take you to the library."

They began to walk to the fifth room when Twilight stopped suddenly. "Oh, wait; I forgot my chemistry book back in Mr. Chaos Theory's room. I'll be right back."

She ran down the hall at full speed and Applejack laughed. That mare sure does love her books. As she waited for Twilight to come back, a unicorn mare walked up to her. Her coat was a light grey, mane and tail black with pink and blue streaks, and eyes pink. She wore a white shirt and tie under a blue sleeveless sweater vest, and a dark purple skirt that went down to her knees. Small glasses sat perched on her nose.

She looked uncertain. "Um, excuse me, are you Applejack?"

Applejack looked at her for a moment. "Yes, Ah am."

"I just wanted to warn you to look out for Jonie Jericho; especially when you're talking to Ryder."

"Um, why?"

The mare shook her head. "I've said enough. Please, just be careful."

The mare then walked away. Applejack stared after her. Scratch what she thought before, that was definitely the weirdest encounter she ever had in her life.

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Ryder was doodling nonsense in his notebook when the final bell rang. He stretched his arms over his head. Thank Celestia, the day was over. He stuffed his notebook into his backpack and walked out of the room. As he left the building, most students were already forming groups for after school activities. When he made it to the parking lot, he stopped.

An earth pony mare was leaning against his motorcycle; looking bored. Her coat was a bluish-grey, mane and tail long, and maroon, and eyes orange. She wore a spaghetti-strapped top with skinny jeans and

hoof-boots. Her mane was in a ponytail. Ryder sighed. Not this again, he thought.

He walked up to her, and the mare turned and smiled. "Hey, Ryder, what's happening?"

He feigned interest. "Jonie, what brings you to my ride?"

"Oh, I just wanted to see if you wanted to hang out later. Some friends of mine are going to Club Thriller~."

Ryder coughed and rubbed his neck. "Is Brute going to be there?"

"Yep, he is actually."

"Oh, then no."

Jonie groaned. "Oh, come on! You're so pitiful. He really isn't that bad, you know."

He shrugged. "You keep telling yourself that."

"Yeah, well, okay then. I guess I'll see you around."

"I bet you will." He stood there as he watched her leave. And then he sighed in relief. Man, he was glad he dodged that bullet. If he ever stood in the same room with that mutt again, he would surely explode. But he still hoped that Jonie would be careful though.

He got onto his motorcycle, put his helmet on, and was off. He rode for a few minutes before he slowed to a stop. There, walking down the sidewalk was Applejack. He rode up along her and slowed down to match her pace.

"Wow, twice in one day," he said.

Applejack looked up. "Oh, it's you again."

"You know it's dangerous walking the streets by yourself."

She continued walking. "I'll be fine."

"Oh, come on," he rode up onto the sidewalk in front of her. "Hop on, I'll take you home."

She scoffed. "No thanks, I'll take my chances." She walked around him and continued on.

He sighed as he took off his helmet. "Why are you being so bitter, woman?"

She whirled. "Why are ya bein' so nice, man?"

"I just thought maybe I can make up for almost running you over by taking you home," Ryder held his helmet out to her. "So, please, let me take you home."

Applejack stared at him for a moment. Then, slowly but surely, she took the helmet and got onto the bike. He revved it up as she slipped

the helmet on.

"Might want to hold on tight," he called as she wrapped her arms around his waist. Then they were off, riding down the streets at top speed. He was sure she would be screaming her head off right now but she didn't. All she did was show him where to go and soon they arrived in front of her apartment building.

"Well, here we are," he said as she got off and took off his helmet. She tossed it to him.

"Thanks, sugarcube, that was really nice of ya," She turned to leave. He whistled to her.

"Hey," he reached into his bag and grabbed an apple. "I got something for you." She caught it after he tossed it to her.

She stared at him in confusion. "Why are ya giving me this?"

"Well, your name is Applejack so you like apples, right?" He chuckled as he put his helmet on and revved his bike again. "See you around."

He rode away; leaving Applejack standing with an apple in her hand and rolling her eyes.

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Four days later . . .

Applejack stared out the fourth floor window. It has been a while since she started attending Infinite Prep and still she felt out of place. The sky was a bright blue and only a few clouds remained. She stared at the other buildings surrounding the school. Twilight had explained that those buildings were the gym, auditorium, and dormitories.

Applejack had been surprised that anyone would want to live on school campus. If she didn't know any better, she'd think this was a college instead of a high school. She sighed heavily as she rubbed her temples. This school was overwhelming.

"Excuse me, Applejack?"

She turned to see an earth pony mare standing behind her. Her coat was a bluish-grey with a long maroon mane and tail, and orange eyes. Three buttons of her uniform shirt were open and tie was loose. Her skirt was wrinkled and she wore blue hoof-socks that went up to her knees with her black hoof-boots. Her mane was in a high ponytail.

"Um, yeah?"

Immediately, the mare threw a punch that contacted with Applejack's face. Before she could even register what happened, Applejack was then grabbed by the mane and thrown over the stairs. Soon she tumbling and turning down the steps; grunting in pain. She came to a sudden stop when she made it to the third floor.

Ignoring the throbbing pain in her head, Applejack looked up just as

the mare was walking down the stairs.

"It's nothing personal," she said as she cracked her knuckles. "Just following rules."

. . . To be continued . . .

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file.